

Bishop Barber is married to Rebecca Barber, and they have five children: Sharralle; William, III; Benjamin Joseph; Rebecca Eleanor; and Andrew Willard—five wonderful, delightful children.

The other sibling deceased earlier this year. He lived in Grifton, Georgia. His name was Charles Edgar Barber, and he was survived by three children: Shakile, Malik, and Quentin.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate you allowing me time this morning to celebrate and to recognize a great American who has served well over these many years.

SUPPORT FOR OUR SERVICEMEMBERS IN THE NDAA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. CISNEROS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, last week, we passed a National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2020. Working with my colleagues for over 20 hours on the House Armed Services Committee to mark up this bill in the late hours of the night and the early hours of the next day was all worth it.

Mr. Speaker, with the passage of this year's NDAA, we have fulfilled our duties to ensure our military's readiness, strengthened our national security, and eased our servicemembers' transition to civilian life.

I am proud to have helped secure 17 floor amendments for the NDAA, with more than half of those offered on a bipartisan basis. These provisions supported programs that are critical to servicemembers living in the 39th Congressional District.

A major priority of mine is ensuring that our servicemembers have the support they need when they transition back to civilian life. I was proud to colead the bipartisan Work for Warriors provision with my colleagues, Representatives PAUL COOK, ELISSA SLOTKIN, and MARK TAKANO.

The Work for Warriors model has a proven track record of helping our veterans find jobs, providing job placement assistance to unemployed Guardsmen, Reservists, military spouses, and veterans to not only help them provide for their families, but also facilitate their successful transition back to civilian life.

Another priority of mine was to improve the quality of healthcare for servicemembers, especially mental health programs and women's healthcare services. I am proud to have secured a number of provisions that take care of military families by expanding military housing and improving access to healthcare services.

Specifically, I was proud to work with Congresswoman CHRISSY HOULAHAN to expand transition assistance for women servicemembers. This will ensure our servicewomen are better equipped with the healthcare resources they need as they leave military service.

Also, I am hopeful that the amendment my colleagues and I included to address sexual assault at all levels of our military will help our servicemembers and veterans receive the respect and justice they deserve. The high rate of sexual assault in the military is unacceptable and needs to be addressed immediately.

Even though DOD spends millions on sexual assault prevention programs, the number of assaults has jumped dramatically since 2010. We owe it to our servicemembers and veterans to determine why the current programs have been failing, and we need to create a new, effective approach to this problem.

Because, in exchange for their service, our Nation took on the responsibility to care for each servicemember's health, both physical and mental, that is why I prioritized provisions to address the suicide epidemic currently facing our servicemembers and veterans. We are losing servicemembers and veterans to addiction and suicide at alarming rates. It is unacceptable that this epidemic is only getting worse.

I worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to secure language that will help prevent servicemembers from reaching at-risk status and ensure that at-risk servicemembers are identified and able to receive the care they deserve.

Also, I am proud to have supported an amendment with Congresswoman JACKIE SPEIER to protect our transgender servicemembers. As a Navy veteran, I was saddened by our government's willingness to discriminate against individuals who had the courage, spirit, and commitment to serve our country in uniform.

Anyone who has the bravery to serve our country should be allowed to do so, and I stand firmly against the administration's ban on transgender servicemembers. I will continue to fight against this hateful and bigoted policy until the President and his administration understand that transgender servicemembers have the right to their dignity, and they have the right to serve.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the NDAA reaffirms our constitutional authority over the use of military force. With this provision, Congress reasserts our congressional authority and its duty to our country and our servicemembers, and it makes clear to the President that there is no current authorization to use military force against Iran. We understand how Iran destabilizes the region, and it is our responsibility in Congress to ensure that the U.S. does not enter into a conflict without a strategy.

In closing, while I have said much on what this House has accomplished with this bill, I would like to end with this: I thank our servicemembers, civilian military personnel, and all the national security professionals who support our Armed Services in my district, in our country, and around the world.

It is an honor to represent them in Congress to ensure the promises made here are kept for our servicemembers and our veterans.

PASS OUR 2020 NDAA BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization Act for 2020, a measure which sets policy for the folks who wear the uniform of this country.

The U.S. Congress has actually passed a defense authorization act every year for the last 57 years. This year, if we all continue to work together, we can make it 58 years running.

Again, this is a measure which sets everything from military pay—a 3.1 percent pay raise for the military, the largest pay increase in the last 10 years—to setting the ground rules for military acquisition, whether it is recapitalizing our Navy or buying the new F-35 planes for the Air Force. It is a large, sprawling bill which covers, again, all aspects of U.S. defense policy for the upcoming year.

Included in this measure was an amendment that I offered for which, on Friday evening, the Iraq and Afghan Veterans of America issued a strong statement of support in the wake of passage of the bill.

What my amendment did is it offset a policy decision that was made in July of 2018 by the Trump administration which cut off the ability of long-serving members of the military to transfer their GI Bill educational benefits to a spouse or dependent. Again, the IAVA, which TIME Magazine has described as the most important organization representing a new generation of veterans—what my amendment did was it eliminated what IAVA described as a shortsighted policy change announced by the Department of Defense in July 2015, which would have limited transferability to servicemembers with less than 16 years of Active-Duty service and excluded servicemembers who had served for nearly the entirety of the war on terror.

In 2008, we changed the GI bill, recognizing, again, that we have an all-volunteer force and that the GI Bill, which goes back to Franklin Roosevelt signing it 75 years ago, had deteriorated over time. We restored the value of the educational benefit, and we created, for the first time, the ability of a servicemember to transfer, on a one-time basis only, the educational benefit to a spouse or child.

Again, what this did was it took the burden of those who were serving particularly long periods of time in our military at great economic sacrifices the ability to at least take one family member's educational benefits for higher education.